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EAST GERMANY: Party Congress

The crisis in Poland provides a somber setting for East Germany's 10th Party Congress, which opens on Saturday. [REDACTED]

In addition to the menace of new political forces emerging in Poland, developments there are putting a burden on the East German economy. East Germany has provided Poland with over \$100 million in hard currency loans and substantial quantities of food and consumer goods. [REDACTED]

If the Soviet delegation is led, as expected, by party ideologist Suslov, he may amplify President Brezhnev's statement yesterday on Poland, perhaps in a more negative vein. East German leader Honecker will echo these warnings, but he will also stress the Warsaw Pact's "peace offensive" toward the West. [REDACTED]

Although there are no organized dissident groups in East Germany and there is no apparent inclination to imitate the Polish workers, the regime worries about the declining rate of growth in party membership and the increasing isolation of the party. Party functionaries keep a close watch on the churches, which have some independence and probably would be the rallying point for any discontent following an intervention in Poland. Such unrest, however, would not be likely to threaten the regime. [REDACTED]

Honecker is in his 10th year as party leader and firmly in control. Although he appears in excellent health and seems to enjoy Moscow's full confidence, he will be 69 this year and the succession question is thus beginning to receive attention. [REDACTED]

Some younger leaders may be promoted to senior positions, but none of the changes will significantly affect East German policy. The most important change at the Congress might be the replacement of ailing Premier Stoph by Politburo member and economic chief Mittag. [REDACTED]

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